

# Is your practice aware of CDC hepatitis B vaccination recommendations for adults?

Hepatitis B vaccination is the most effective measure to prevent hepatitis B infection and its consequences.<sup>1</sup> The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) first issued recommendations for hepatitis B vaccination in 1982. Since then, a strategy to eliminate hepatitis B transmission in the US has evolved. This strategy includes vaccinating all infants beginning at birth, children and adolescents not previously vaccinated, and unvaccinated adults at risk for hepatitis B infection.<sup>1</sup> During 1990-2005, the incidence of acute hepatitis B infection in the US declined 78%. The greatest decline (96%) was among children and adolescents, which coincided with the increase in hepatitis B vaccination coverage.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the CDC's recommendation that adults at risk for hepatitis B and other adults seeking protection against the virus should be vaccinated, hepatitis B vaccination coverage in the US has been low.<sup>2</sup> The 2012 National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) reported that an estimated 35.3% of adults ages 19 to 49 were vaccinated ( $\geq 3$  doses) against hepatitis B.<sup>3</sup>

## **CDC strategies to improve vaccination rates<sup>3</sup>**

- Patient education and publicity
- Increased access to vaccination services
- Office practices shown to improve vaccination coverage:
  - Standing order programs for vaccinations
  - Reminder-recall system
  - Removal of administrative and financial barriers
  - Assessment of practice-level vaccination rates with feedback to staff

## **More about hepatitis B and those at risk**

### **Transmission**

Hepatitis B is transmitted through contact with infectious blood, semen, and other body fluids, primarily through<sup>4</sup>:

- Birth to an infected mother
- Sexual contact with an infected person
- Sharing of contaminated needles, syringes, or other injection drug equipment
- Needlesticks or other sharp instrument injuries

### **Symptoms and consequences**

- Initial symptoms of an acute infection include<sup>4</sup>:
  - Abdominal pain
  - Fever
  - Jaundice
  - Loss of appetite
  - Fatigue
  - Gray-colored stools
  - Joint pain
  - Nausea and vomiting
- Most persons with an acute infection recover without lasting liver damage<sup>4</sup>
- About 6% to 10% of acute hepatitis B infections in unimmunized older children and adults become chronic<sup>4</sup>
- 15% to 25% of chronically infected persons develop chronic liver disease, including cirrhosis, liver failure, or liver cancer<sup>4</sup>

# Is your practice aware of CDC hepatitis B vaccination recommendations for adults?

## CDC recommends vaccination for the following adult groups<sup>2,5</sup>:

- All persons seeking protection from HBV infection — acknowledgment of a specific risk factor is not a requirement for vaccination
- Susceptible sex partners of hepatitis B surface antigen (HBsAg)-positive persons
- Sexually active persons who are not in a long-term, mutually monogamous relationship (eg, >1 sex partner during the previous 6 months)
- Persons seeking evaluation or treatment for a sexually transmitted disease
- Men who have sex with men
- Current or recent injection drug users
- Healthcare personnel and public safety workers who are potentially exposed to blood or other infectious body fluids
- Susceptible household contacts of HBsAg-positive persons
- Persons with end-stage renal disease, including predialysis, hemodialysis, peritoneal dialysis, and home dialysis patients
- Residents and staff of facilities for developmentally disabled persons
- Persons with HIV infection
- Unvaccinated adults with diabetes mellitus who are aged 19 through 59 years (discretion of clinicians for unvaccinated adults with diabetes mellitus who are aged ≥60 years)
- All adults in the following settings:
  - STD treatment facilities
  - HIV testing and treatment facilities
  - Facilities providing drug abuse treatment and prevention services
  - Healthcare settings targeting services to injection drug users or men who have sex with men
  - Correctional facilities
  - End-stage renal disease programs and facilities for chronic hemodialysis patients
  - Institutions and nonresidential day care facilities for persons with developmental disabilities
- Travelers to regions with intermediate or high rates of endemic HBV infection
- Persons with chronic liver disease

You can help protect your patients from vaccine-preventable diseases.

**References:** 1. Mast EE, Weinbaum CM, Fiore AE, et al. A comprehensive immunization strategy to eliminate transmission of hepatitis B virus infection in the United States. Recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) Part II: Immunization of Adults. *MMWR*. 2006; 55(RR-16):1-33. <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/pdf/rr/rr5516.pdf>. Accessed July 10, 2014. 2. Recommended adult immunization schedule. United States – 2014. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Web site. <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules/downloads/adult/adult-combined-schedule.pdf>. Accessed July 11, 2014. 3. Williams WW, Lu PJ, O'Halloran A, et al. Noninfluenza vaccination coverage among adults – United States, 2012. *MMWR*. 2014;63(05):95-102. <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6305a4.htm>. Accessed May 16, 2014. 4. The ABCs of hepatitis. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Web site. <http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/resources/professionals/pdfs/abctable.pdf>. Accessed July 11, 2014. 5. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Recommended immunization schedules for persons aged 0 through 18 years—United States, 2014. <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules/downloads/child/0-18yrs-child-combined-schedule.pdf>. Accessed May 29, 2014.

**Identify and talk with your adult patients who may benefit from hepatitis B vaccination.**



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